



SHELLFISHERMEN depart the docks in Varnamtown Tuesday morning, when a section of Lockwood Folly River was opened to the harvest of oysters and clams. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Local Shellfishermen Reunite As River Opens To Harvesting

BY DOUG RUTTER

It was like a reunion at the docks in Varnamtown Tuesday morning as area shellfishermen who hadn't gathered oysters or clams in Lockwood Folly River for three months exchanged greetings and wished each other the best.

A section of the river reopened to the harvesting of shellfish at sunrise Tuesday, renewing hope in the local fishing community that the Lockwood Folly still has something to offer in the midst of one of the worst local oyster seasons in years.

"I think it's about time," Ernie Galloway of Varnamtown said Tuesday, as he prepared to go into the river with his wife and two sons. "There's pretty good oysters and clams out there. But I don't think with the amount of people it's going to last very long."

There was a steady flow of traffic at the Varnamtown boat docks Tuesday morning, including people who normally work in Shallotte River or elsewhere. As the tide went out, skiffs carrying three or four people apiece headed south to the flats. By mid-afternoon, however, most of those skiffs had returned to the docks, carrying disappointed fishermen with small harvests.

The lower portion of the river, downstream of an area known as Genoes Point on the river's west bank,

was temporarily reopened to harvesting. All river waters upstream of that point remain closed, along with a section of Davis Creek and the Intracoastal Waterway east of Lockwood Folly.

In another proclamation, effective at sunrise Wednesday, the state extended by three seconds longitude—the area in the lower river open to harvest.

Before Tuesday, the lower portion of the river had been open to shellfishing only five days since oyster season opened in October. All of the river was closed to shellfish harvesting Oct. 23 due to unsafe levels of coliform bacteria, an indicator of pollution.

Michael Leonard of Shell Point said Tuesday morning he was glad to see a portion of Lockwood Folly open again, but he doesn't think it should have been closed in the first place.

"I think it's bad to close any of these rivers," he said. "It's just a ridiculous mess."

Leonard said he hoped to collect enough shellfish to cover his electric bill, but seafood dealers reported small harvests Tuesday afternoon.

Nicky Varnam at Garland's Fresh Seafood said oysters and clams were scarce. "There ain't too much down there," he said. "They got anywhere from two bushels to six bushels per boat."

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Petition Seeks To Undo Varnam Incorporation

BY SUSAN USHER

Sixteen months after Varnamtown became a town, some of its residents are circulating a petition in an effort to return the community to its previous status.

Former alderman Marion Davis brought the petition to the town board's attention last Thursday night, suggesting the board needed "to look into it as quickly as possible."

Saying that he had seen the petition and that it had more than 100 signatures on it, he continued, "You need to find out what's wrong and why people are signing it." Davis said he understood rumors were circulating in town that he was involved in the petition drive. "I did not and have not had anything to do with it," he continued.

Rudolph (Rudy) Simmons of Riverside, one of the residents who is involved in the effort to have the town unincorporated, acknowledged Tuesday that the petition is being circulated. But he added, "I'd rather not comment on it at this time."

Simmons was one of the opponents of incorporation in 1988, when residents of the closeknit fishing village on Lockwood Folly River petitioned Rep. E. David Redwine to introduce local legislation to allow a referendum on incorporation.

The bill passed. When the referendum was held Sept. 20, 177 of the town's 181 registered voters turned out. The measure passed, 102 for, 75 against.

A copy of the petition and its exact wording was not available to *The Brunswick Beacon* this week.

However, according to the Brunswick County Board of Elections, those seeking unincorporation of the town could ask for one of two things in the petition: 1) That their representative introduce legislation to unincorporate the town during the upcoming short session; or 2) That the state legislature provide for a referendum of town residents to decide the question.

Rep. E. David Redwine was on

"We'll get a copy of it, go over it and see what Mr. Redwine does with it."

—Judy Galloway
Mayor, Varnamtown

vacation and not available for comment. However, in the past, following the state legislature's operating rules, he and other legislators have avoided introducing issues of a potentially controversial nature during the short session.

Mayor Judy Galloway said last Thursday night that she doesn't understand why the town board of aldermen hasn't been contacted by those circulating the petition.

"No one's come to us and said anything. I don't understand why they would go behind our backs and do this, why they wouldn't come to us," she said to an audience of approximately 15 residents gathered at Gospel Center Baptist Church.

Until the town receives a copy of the petition, she said, the town board can do little in response to it. When it is formally notified of the effort to unincorporate Varnamtown, she said, the petition will be checked to make sure all those signing it are residents of the town and are registered to vote. "We'll get a copy of it, go over it and see what Mr. Redwine does with it," she said. "That's all we can do."

As of last Wednesday the town had 219 registered voters.

Warning to the topic of incorporation, Alderman Ada McDonald reminded those present that the town has "moved forward" since the incorporation vote, holding a successful Founder's Day celebration and seeing a higher percentage of voter turnout for its municipal elections in November than most other towns in the county. "It shows the people have an interest," she said.

Mrs. McDonald also pointed out the revenues coming into the town that were going to other communities in the past, and noted the town

expects to receive approximately \$50,000 this year. Steps have been taken to secure land for a town hall, she continued, and the town is working to respond to needs and concerns expressed by its citizens.

"I don't see it as an issue now," she said of the petition effort. "I think they (town residents) trust us and have confidence that they can come to us."

After the hard work that went into getting the town established, she said, "I couldn't take action to damage this town."

Responded the mayor, "Well said."

Other Business

With Aldermen Roger Robinson and Ennis Swain absent, the board took no action regarding street naming following a brief public hearing. Alderman McDonald said the board is still seeking suggestions for several street names, including names for portions of Lancaster Drive that are inside the town limits.

The street follows a circuitous path through Riverside I into Riverside II subdivision, with part of the street outside the Varnamtown municipal boundaries. This creates a duplication of street names inside and outside the town. While the state uses road numbers, the county uses street names as well. Alderman McDonald said renaming portions of Lancaster would also make it easier for local fire and rescue units to respond to calls.

In other street-related business, Mel Kitchens recommended yet another alternative name for Champion Drive—White Sand Lane.

In other business, the board: —Voted to ask the Local Government Commission to allow the town (See PETITION, Page 2-A)

EASLEY, REDWINE FILE

Boiling Spring Lakes Police Chief Enters Democratic Race For Sheriff

BY RAHN ADAMS

With less than two weeks remaining in the filing period, the race for Brunswick County sheriff heated up this week, as Boiling Spring Lakes Police Chief J.R. "Jim" Vaughan filed to run against incumbent Sheriff John C. Davis in the May 8 Democratic primary.

According to the Brunswick County Board of Elections office, Vaughan was one of four candidates to file here for public office between Jan. 17 and 23. The five-

week filing period ends at noon Feb. 5.

Vaughan, of Route 6, Southport, has served as the town's head law enforcement officer for the past five years. "You're always swimming upstream when you face an incumbent," the Roanoke Rapids native said Tuesday of challenging Davis. "I just feel people have a right to a choice."

Davis is seeking his second full term as sheriff. He was appointed to the post in 1983, following the res-

ignation of former Sheriff Herman Strong. Republican candidates for sheriff include Shallotte Alderman David L. Gause and Long Beach Police Officer William "Bill" Sisk.

In other county races, incumbent District 5 County Commissioner Grace Beasley, a Democrat, will see opposition in May. Mike Holmes, 40, of Leland, filed Monday for the Democratic commissioner race. A political newcomer, Holmes has been employed by Southern Bell for

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Sting Uncovers First Non-Taxpaid Drugs

BY RAHN ADAMS

A South Carolina man last week became the first accused drug dealer to be billed in Brunswick County for not paying a new tax on controlled substances, according to a county drug agent.

Brunswick County Narcotics Squad Officer Mike Speck said Wayne Allen Phillips, 52, of Route 1, North Myrtle Beach, S.C., was served with an unpaid tax notice Friday, the day after Phillips was arrested on drug trafficking charges in Calabash.

Phillips was charged with trafficking by transportation and trafficking by possession of more than 28 grams of methamphetamine, a crystalline substance commonly known as "speed" or "crank," Speck noted.

The charges stemmed from an undercover drug buy around 4:30 p.m. last Thursday outside the Calabash Post Office. Speck said the arrest was the culmination of a "short-term" undercover operation involving the

sheriff's department, Ocean Isle Beach Police, the SBI and federal Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division.

Friday, Horry County, S.C., authorities searched Phillips' North Myrtle Beach residence and seized six pounds of methamphetamine, Speck added.

The officer said Monday that additional charges against Phillips and other arrests in the case were pending here. He explained that authorities believe Phillips had a contact in Brunswick County and had not personally sold drugs here until last Thursday.

Phillips was being held in the Brunswick County Jail Monday under a \$100,000 bond. Speck said the suspect also was awaiting a visit Monday from a state revenue official concerning approximately \$22,000 Phillips now owes in controlled substance taxes.

"I asked him, 'Do you have a tax stamp?,' and he said, 'No,'" Speck commented Monday. "As of this (See STING, Page 2-A)

Public Hearing Slated Monday On 911-Related Telephone Tax

BY RAHN ADAMS

While county officials so far have heard only positive remarks from local municipal boards, telephone subscribers throughout Brunswick County will have a chance next week to comment on a proposed 50-cent monthly surcharge to pay for a countywide 911 emergency telephone system.

The public hearing will be held Monday at 7 p.m., in the Public Assembly Building, Bolivia, by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners and representatives from a majority of the county's 17 municipalities.

According to Interim County Manager David Clegg, the following towns have notified him that they plan to participate in the joint hearing: Shallotte, Holden Beach, Ocean Isle Beach, Sunset Beach, Calabash, Varnamtown, Belville, Caswell Beach, Yaupon Beach, Sandy Creek, Leland, Long Beach and Southport.

As of Monday, the town boards of Navassa, Bald Head Island, Bolivia and Boiling Spring Lakes had not contacted Clegg about attending Monday's session. However, he indicated that a surcharge ordinance passed by county commissioners would cover the entire county, including towns that do not participate in the hearing.

Though the main purpose of the session is to clear the way for the surcharge, Clegg and county Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan noted that telephone company representatives also will be present to explain how 911 works and to answer individuals'

questions about the sophisticated system. Brunswick County is served by Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation and Southern Bell.

"Not a word," replied Clegg, when asked Monday if any opposition to the surcharge has been voiced. "All I'm getting is 'go, go, go.'"

Logan echoed the county manager's remarks. "All I've heard are positive comments from everybody I've talked to," Logan said. "You can't even go buy a (soft drink) for 50 cents any more, and we'll be paying for a whole 911 system" with the proposed 50-cent per subscriber monthly charge.

"People mainly want to know why (the 911 system) isn't already in place," the coordinator said.

Total installation cost of 911 is \$243,840 and will be due when the system is operational. On-going monthly maintenance costs will amount to \$13,956. Logan told commissioners in November that the 50-cent surcharge could recoup the installation costs in 18 months and then continue to cover the monthly maintenance costs.

Under state law, the surcharge cannot be levied until 120 days after the county ordinance is adopted. If commissioners adopt the ordinance at their February meeting, the 50-cent tariff could be added to local bills beginning in June.

According to a letter of intent signed by commissioners in December, the county's 911 system will go into operation by January 1992. A period of between 18 months and two years is needed for Southern Bell to create a local 911 data base, which includes listings of

local telephone subscribers, their locations, and the police, fire and rescue agencies that would respond to emergencies at individual locations.

With an enhanced 911 system, a caller can obtain help simply by dialing the three-digit number. No verbal communication with a telecommunicator is necessary, in the event that the caller is unable to speak. Seconds after the telephone connection is made at a 911 "public safety answering point" (PSAP), the programmed information on the caller's location flash onto the telecommunicator's computer terminal.

The letter of intent lists "Brunswick County EMS" in Supply as the local system's primary PSAP location. Plans are eventually to move the county emergency management office to the old Agricultural Extension Service/Brunswick Community College building on U.S. 17 at Supply. Backup PSAP locations are proposed for the Southport and Long Beach police departments.

Logan explained that Southport and Long Beach agreed to house PSAPs, because they wish to continue dispatching their own emergency calls. "The other areas in the county don't have established dispatching systems," he said.

The coordinator added that the county's volunteer fire departments and rescue squads also will be able to continue dispatching for themselves if they so choose, since the 911 system will allow calls to be rerouted from the 911 communications center to the individual departments. Choices between the two options will be left up to the departments, he said.

"The system can be made to accommodate any one or all of the departments," Logan commented. However, he noted that true centralized dispatching from the 911 communications center would take best advantage of 911's benefits: quicker communications and shorter response times to emergencies.

While the data base is being installed, the county planning department continues to work on road-naming and house-numbering projects—both of which are necessary so that 911 telecommunicators can dispatch the proper departments to the exact location of an emergency call.

In a brief report to the Brunswick County Planning Board last week, planner Tom Birmingham estimated that new road signs—an important part of the road-naming project—will cost the county at least \$150,000.

According to Clegg, planning officials will briefly update commissioners on the road-naming project at a work session today (Thursday) at 6:30 p.m., in the Public Assembly Building. The board is expected to set public hearing dates on new road names.

Although he noted that preparation work for 911 is a "massive undertaking" for the county, Clegg stated, "The county has made a two-year commitment, and I fully expect it to be met."

Commissioners went on record in support of 911 as far back as May 1987. The board also allocated \$250,000 for the system in both the 1988-89 and 1989-90 county budgets.